

The University of Chicago

THE LOCAL HOUSING AUTHORITY AND
THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

1941

By

ANNETTE BAKER FOX

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The Local Housing Authority and the Municipal Government

By ANNETTE BAKER FOX*

THE 40-year struggle for the integration of local government in the interest of concentrated public responsibility, efficiency, and economy has now to be waged on a new front. Like the governmental functions new a century ago, public housing is administered by a legally independent board of non-salaried officials with overlapping terms. Although this new authority lacks the power to tax, its independence creates serious problems in the coordination of local government.

A public housing program touches practically every phase of municipal government—health, safety, recreation, education, welfare, public works, as well as the overhead management of a municipality, especially finance and planning. Furthermore, public housing projects constitute only one element in a comprehensive local housing program. As large scale developments they significantly change the city pattern. Their effects on urban life are prolonged over generations and radically alter the development of the city as a whole, socially as well as physically. Consequently, the activities of the local housing authority are certain to become an intimate concern of the municipal government. On the other hand, no public housing program undertaken by the housing authority may hope for success without active collaboration of the local government.

With these considerations in mind, case studies were made in New York

City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo to ascertain the extent to which adequate municipal coordination has been (or can be) achieved with the independent housing authority.¹

Coordinated Public Policy

Not only do uncoordinated government activities mean that the taxpayers' money is being wasted, but conflicting public policies may result. Of two policies in conflict both cannot faithfully mirror the public will. The electorate expects the city council and mayor to be responsible for deciding public policy for the municipality. Without coordination, an independent unit operating in the same area may interfere with the execution of this policy.

In all five cities under discussion some municipal control over the housing authority was possible largely because of the power of the city council to approve, reject, or secure modification of a "cooperation contract." This agreement embodied the housing authority's proposals to the city government concerning payments in lieu of taxes on housing projects, provision of municipal services, and the acceptance by each governmental unit of responsibility for other details. No United States Housing Authority project could be built without municipal consent to this contract. The general form and content were prescribed by USHA, although some modification at the municipal level was permitted. Once the city had approved a contract, it

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¹ The complete data may be found in the writer's "Coordination of the Local Housing Authority with the Municipal Government" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of

Chicago, 1941). Experience in defense housing lies outside the scope of this study, since the local housing authority has acted, if at all, merely as the agent of the Federal Government.

lost the opportunity to impose further restrictions on the housing authority with respect to that project. Thus, the cooperation contract is not a device for continuous coordination.

Where a general understanding exists between members of the housing authority and the municipal government regarding the goals to be achieved, coordination on a voluntary basis occurs. This largely explains the notable progress of public housing in New York City and Pittsburgh. Experience in New York City also reveals that a forceful municipal executive can continue to influence housing authority policy, even contrary to the spirit of the law which specifies the independence of the authority. He can thus bring about coordination and concentrated responsibility. Effective coordination was evident also in Pittsburgh, where the chairman of the housing authority was an influential member of the city council.

A perverted type of policy coordination takes place when a political machine gains control not only of the municipal government but of independent units as well. In spite of the faith expressed by advocates of independence, separate organization does not guarantee immunity from corrupt politics. Fortunately, local housing authorities with very rare exceptions have so far resisted the intrusion of the spoilsmen. The members have been high-minded, public-spirited citizens; they have not yet become bored with the monotonous duty of maintaining the projects they have been constructing. With its power to withdraw operating subsidies from offending authorities, the continued vigilance of USHA has also been a factor supporting incorruptible administration.

Whether or not the housing authority's policies are closely integrated with those enunciated by the city council, what

about its relationship with the community at large? Harmonious contacts between the housing authority and social and civic groups representing the articulate public may in turn influence the relationship of the housing authority to the government itself. Among the devices for securing public support, housing authorities have sought the assistance of citizen advisory committees. This was especially notable in Philadelphia, where the authority also used the public meeting to discuss policies.

Full public reporting, so that citizens know what the housing authority is doing and its future plans, enables the public to decide whether a housing authority has in fact been responsive to the community's needs and desires. Most effective were the annual reports which housing authorities in New York City, Philadelphia, and Chicago have published. In addition, all (Chicago very belatedly) carried on extensive publicity programs. In general, the housing authorities were more fully informing the public about their activities than were most old-line municipal departments. Housing, like any new function, needs popularizing—thus the emphasis on full reporting and "educational" work.

The housing authority exhibits two disadvantages common to older independent units. (1) In a complicated array of overlapping governments the authority adds just one more unit, further dividing public attention to the detriment of the local government as a whole. (2) Closely related to the competition for public attention is the competition for public funds. In 1938 while the services of the regulatory housing agencies in the municipal departments languished in Philadelphia for want of money, the housing authority received \$20,000 to discover substandard housing ready for demolition. The crisis two years

later over expanding the Philadelphia housing program was based in part on the dissatisfaction of the municipal government over the amount of the payments to be made in lieu of taxes. Looking upon the housing authority as a separate body, the municipal officials sought to obtain as much as possible of the funds controlled by the housing authority. In other cities the housing authorities have ordinarily received much more adequate support from the municipal government in proportion to their needs than have the municipal housing regulatory agencies, which are notoriously understaffed and underpaid.

Coordinated Fiscal Administration

When the municipal government allocates its proposed expenditures, policy determination merges with fiscal control. In adopting a cooperative policy regarding housing authority projects, the municipal government agreed to lend or give the housing authorities funds for working capital; most cities also made substantial contributions toward the development cost of the projects. Nevertheless, the fiscal officers of the municipal government, except in New York State, had no jurisdiction over the budgeting, accounting, or expenditure of funds by the housing authority, unless the authority requested and obtained additional loans or appropriations for administrative expenses or working capital. When these funds had been used up or paid back, the municipal officials had no further control.

Under the Public Housing Law of 1939 in New York State,² additional powers and responsibilities were granted to the city council (in New York City to the Board of Estimate). For future projects

it must approve the plans prepared by the housing authority. If the latter sells bonds to private individuals or corporations, obtains state aid—which requires a periodic matching municipal subsidy—or receives loans and subsidies from the municipality itself, the council's approval must be obtained. Loans and subsidies from the municipal government must be approved according to the same procedure as municipal capital projects. The council must also approve salary schedules of the housing authority.

Housing officials today face a dilemma. They must choose between adequate local financial support and retaining their valued independence. Income from projects built through USHA aid cannot bear the complete cost of a well rounded housing program. Yet, if the municipal government were to make annual appropriations to the authority, as though it were a non-self-sustaining municipal department, the authority should be subject to the same municipal fiscal controls as a regular department. In this way financial responsibility would be insured. Furthermore, the fiscal operations of the housing authority might be coordinated with those of the municipality through overhead management, for the fiscal officers conduct most of the investigating, planning, and coordinating work of the municipality.³

In most cities the one sizable annual subsidy provided by the municipal government for the housing authority is in the form of tax exemption. Without going into a lengthy discussion of the pros and cons of such a subsidy, the most important disadvantages from the point of view of coordination are these: (1) it is a subsidy whose precise amount is difficult to calculate; (2) it tends to distribute the

² N. Y. Laws 1939, c. 808.

³ In addition to overhead management, coordination is also promoted by the use of municipal auxiliary services. All the housing authorities had close contacts with

the municipal department of law, which in some cases provided legal counsel for the authority. New York City and Pittsburgh purchasing and testing agencies were also used by the housing authorities in those cities.

tax burden haphazardly and inequitably;⁴ (3) it is inflexible; (4) it admits of no administrative control or check on standards; and (5) it arouses a deep-seated hostility which has already become serious in some cities.

Proponents argue that tax exemption is perhaps the only expedient form of subsidy now available. They do not want to risk the probable delay and opposition to more direct methods of subsidy, such as appropriating to housing the proceeds of an additional tax levy. They contend that housing should not be singled out to suffer because of the faulty and inadequate tax system. They claim that tax exemption does not directly and immediately withdraw money from public funds. It would follow that the financial plight of municipalities today is not aggravated by this particular demand for additional expenditures. Yet proponents seldom specifically recognize that, where no additional taxes are imposed, housing is favored at the expense of other, perhaps equally vital, municipal services.

Federal officials, in justifying the USHA requirement that there be tax exemption, argue that slum property does not return much in taxes anyway and the loss in tax revenues will be offset by the lowered costs of servicing former slum areas and by the increased valuation of surrounding property. To be consistent, the USHA formula for maximum permissible payments in lieu of taxes should take account of this argument. Instead, it limits these payments to a percentage of the total shelter rent, a figure which bears no relation to the above argument.

Tax exemption for the few projects so far built did not unduly upset municipal finances in the cities studied, although it probably generated as much hostility to public housing as the imposition of an

additional tax to pay for an outright subsidy. Should public housing become much more extensive and continue to be subsidized through tax exemption rather than through an increase in taxation, the municipal revenue-base would be very seriously affected. There is already a large amount of tax exempt property. The danger of too great dependence on tax exemption is now being averted only in New York City, where additional taxes (not directly on real estate) are levied to subsidize state and municipal housing. Furthermore, state-aided projects under the 1939 housing law in New York may be tax exempt only on the difference between the assessed valuation of the property, both land and buildings, on the date of the signing of the loan contract and its valuation after completion of the project. Even this exemption is at the discretion of the municipality.

Because tax exemption is the "easiest method" of subsidy it tends to postpone urgently needed tax reforms. The absence of scientifically administered assessment systems, the penalty accompanying property improvements through resulting increased taxes, the inequitable distribution of revenues collected from the municipalities by the state, the needlessly complicated tax foreclosure proceedings which render difficult the use of tax foreclosed property for municipal purposes—all these faults in the tax system directly affect the housing problem itself.

In general, fiscal coordination between the housing authority and municipal government exists only in a rudimentary form, although New York State adopted legislation in 1939 providing for much closer financial relations between city and housing authority. Municipal control over housing authority finances is

⁴ For example, where the local subsidy is in the form of tax exemption, low income families not so fortunate as to be admitted to the projects may pay part of the

subsidy through higher rents to cover increased taxes on non-exempt property.

barred both by law and by the form of municipal financial aid—tax exemption.

Coordinated Personnel Management

Although hitherto more important in theory than in practice as an agency for overhead management, the role of the civil service commission in coordination must not be overlooked. Ideally, the commission should act not only as an auxiliary but as a staff agency, continually seeking to improve personnel programs and to coordinate personnel policies on all fronts. Actually, the municipal civil service commission has not always performed well even its elementary auxiliary function of selecting personnel on a non-political basis.

The quality of civil service administration is one reason why many housing officials are reluctant to be placed under the jurisdiction of the civil service commission. Also important is their belief that housing is too new a profession for the standardized procedures of the merit system to produce uniformly satisfactory appointments.⁵ Most discussion of housing and civil service centers around the recruitment for positions requiring specialized competence in public housing. There would seem to be little reason why positions outside this category should not be filled through the civil service commission. Other aspects of personnel management, such as promotions, disciplinary actions, and retirement systems, have not yet raised difficult problems for most housing authorities.

In brief, the personnel system of the housing authority has not been coordinated with the municipal civil service except in a very few cities, notably New York. The merit system is spreading in the public housing field, but the low level

of administration in the municipal civil service commission is an effective obstacle to coordinated personnel management.

Coordinated Planning

Vital for harmonizing housing authority activities with those of the municipal government is an active and powerful city planning agency. Here, as elsewhere, successful coordination requires a clear allocation of functions and an appropriate division of labor. In all the cities studied there was some type of city planning body playing a part in the physical planning of the municipality; but except in New York City, where the commission also had duties relating to the capital budget, and in Pittsburgh, the planning commissions lacked real authority and were more or less quiescent.⁶

With a public housing program under way which produces dwellings to be amortized in not less than 60 years and promises ultimately to rebuild large sections of the city, the planning commission should have been, but was not, prepared to give substantial aid. Nor could it play its part as a coordinating agency in overhead management. In many cities the housing authority took over most of the planning work itself. It had to begin at the bottom in deciding such crucial questions as housing requirements and location. In consequence, some of the earlier projects were better planned from the point of view of the present inhabitants than in relation to the city development as a whole.

When the planning commission is active, interlocking membership between the two agencies, the use of a joint staff, and employment of a liaison official are devices useful in coordinating the hous-

⁵ New York, Michigan, and Connecticut have led the way in requiring the merit system for housing authorities. For over two years authorities in New York City, Detroit, and Syracuse have selected their personnel through the municipal civil service commission, whereas

Chicago and Pittsburgh are among those with voluntarily inaugurated separate merit systems.

⁶ Chicago in 1940 established a vigorous new plan commission.

ing authority and planning commission. Thus, the chairman of the Pittsburgh City Planning Commission and the secretary of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission served as consultants to the respective housing authorities.

Whether or not the rise of public housing has renewed interest in city planning, a regeneration along modern lines is taking place in many cities. Through the coordinating function of the city planning commission the maximum utilization of community resources thus becomes possible. In New York City planning has progressed so far that certain housing activities relating to site selection and design may be modified by the city planning commission in accordance with the master city plan now being developed. No serious conflicts have occurred between the commission and housing authority in New York, although the same cannot be said for the local planners' relations with USHA. Continuous contact between the two local bodies and consideration of joint problems in the formative stage have prevented unnecessary friction.

For effective city planning an urban public land policy is necessary which includes improved methods for the acquisition and utilization of municipal property. With a more liberal policy of land acquisition the municipality could control urban development, combat land speculation, and have land available for low-rent housing, recreation, education, and other public facilities. Thus may coordination both within the municipal government and between local governments be promoted. The housing authority would particularly benefit, for an important aspect of its work is land acquisition. In line with such a policy the New York State constitutional amendment on housing permits any agency of the state or any public corporation to take property for housing in excess of need; this can be

used for any public purpose thereafter. The amendment also permits the acquisition of reserve land which may later be needed for housing or slum clearance.⁷

Few cities have an agency for the central management of the acquisition, use, maintenance, and disposal of public land and buildings. Although this lack of coordination is primarily serious for the municipal government, it also affects the housing authority whenever it seeks land for public housing. Rational use and exchange of tax delinquent property are among the many advantages which might accrue both to the city government and to the housing authority. Where central management agencies do exist, housing authority staff members have not been included among the consultants. Of the cities studied, only New York and Pittsburgh undertook centralized management of the city's real property. In neither case was there any significant instance of cooperation between the municipal agency and the housing authority.

In summary, most city planning commissions were unprepared to play their proper role in coordinating the housing authority with the municipal government. Housing projects produced substantial changes in the city pattern without guidance or control from any municipal agency. The most conspicuous exception to this situation was New York City where the 1939 law requires the city planning commission's approval of all housing projects.

A Comprehensive Housing Program through Coordination

We have seen that coordination between the housing authority and municipal government with respect to policy determination and administrative management leaves much to be desired. What can be said for a different aspect of coordination, the articulation of the

⁷ N. Y. State Const., Art. XVIII, §§ 8 and 9.

housing authority's line activities with those of other local agencies in the interest of a comprehensive housing program? Such a program would include the following intimately related activities requiring public action: (1) the construction and management of subsidized housing for low income groups that cannot afford decent, safe, and sanitary private housing; (2) establishment and maintenance of standards in existing housing through the enforcement of modern building, sanitary, and housing codes, which may require repair, vacation, or demolition; and (3) long range planning which will include a modern zoning ordinance and will relate housing to employment opportunities and to educational, recreational, and shopping facilities.⁸ With this program as a criterion, experience drawn primarily from the five cities studied will be summarized to determine whether or not local agencies made a coordinated effort to improve the housing conditions of low income families.

Local Cooperation for Public Housing. The public housing program required cooperation from several municipal agencies to fulfill its promise of raising living standards. In all cases the board of education cooperated with the housing authority in spreading information on available accommodations and eligibility requirements in housing projects. It often rearranged existing school facilities or provided new schools although curtailed budgets sometimes hindered this latter form of assistance. Occasionally the city school system provided equipment and supervision for pre-school classes in the projects. Aid from the department of public works was indispensable to all the housing authorities, not

only in providing information for housing surveys but also in planning and constructing the projects. Welfare and relief agencies cooperated with the housing authorities in tenant selection, in moving displaced tenants, and in arranging for rent allowances when tenants lost their private means of support. In New York City, Pittsburgh, and some other cities, a branch of the public library has been established in housing projects. In these and other fields municipal cooperation was supplemented by WPA and private assistance.

Some types of cooperation were vital to the development and management of the projects. Others were optional and reflected an imaginative grasp of the possibilities of joint action to benefit both housing authority and cooperating agencies. The housing authority usually took the initiative in obtaining aid from other agencies, and the earlier the consultations the more successful the cooperation.

Coordination is impaired where functions essential to a comprehensive housing program are not performed. If the housing authority, in developing its projects, fails to aid displaced families in finding new homes, it severely dislocates neighborhood stability and imposes new burdens on other social agencies. The New York City Housing Authority alone met this problem frankly; it established an active vacancy listing bureau through the aid of WPA. Not only did the bureau provide services for those displaced by housing authority activities. It also extended this service to low income families who were required to move for other reasons, such as compulsory vacation or fire, and thus served several municipal agencies.⁹ Where families cannot them-

⁸ Two other important aspects not discussed here are: (1) the stimulation of construction by cooperative, limited dividend, and private companies for those above the subsidy level, and (2) reclamation of blighted areas. The meager achievements in these fields occurred without much stimulus from local housing authorities.

⁹ The New York State Public Housing Law of 1939 requires that a tenant placement service be provided and that studies be made from time to time to discover unoccupied dwellings and arrangements made to have them listed with the service.

selves afford to pay for moving and advance rent charges, there is a public responsibility to ease their plight. In the cities under discussion welfare agencies have given such clients considerable assistance. Some housing authorities also advanced funds to those who were equally needy but not on relief.

Housing Regulation. Outside of New York City, responsibility for the enforcement of housing codes and ordinances is divided among at least three agencies with little coordination among them. In the past, housing regulation has generally been ineffective. A substantial improvement in the enforcement of minimum standards in existing housing was expected with the arrival of public housing.

The requirement of equivalent elimination under the United States Housing Act presented an opportunity for coordinating the work of the housing authority and police power agencies. An agreement between them to fulfill this requirement, following a form proposed by USHA, was in effect in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo.¹⁰ The contract provided for an interchange of information as a result of which a housing authority obtained credit for each substandard unit removed by a regulatory agency.

Elimination through repair was extensively used only in Buffalo; in other cities public housing could thus bring no amelioration of the generally acute housing shortage. Although the requirement of equivalent elimination has tended to stimulate enforcement of building and housing codes, extensive demolition had already taken place in all cities studied.

Data which the New York and Pittsburgh municipal agencies collected for the enforcement of housing standards

were used by the respective housing authorities in checking applications for tenancy in their projects, thus eliminating needless duplication. In New York City the housing authority and the Department of Housing and Buildings jointly conducted surveys and investigations of mutual interest. Coordination in New York was doubtless facilitated by the joint chairmanship of the department and housing authority. When the pressure of housing authority work necessitated the appointment of separate heads, the mayor tried another method of liaison, the creation of a municipal public housing director. This office was filled by the secretary of the housing authority in 1940.

Long-Range Planning. Besides the relation of housing projects to the city plan, there is another important consideration—namely, the authority's plans for its own activities over a long period. Many authorities have been concentrating solely on the immediate, concrete problems connected with a limited number of USHA projects. Without a definite plan for the future, the role of the housing authority is uncertain; and the clear allocation of functions between different agencies is made more difficult.

A prerequisite of planning is adequate information regarding land use and the city plan, housing standards, substandard housing areas, housing needs, and the housing market. All of the housing authorities had of necessity gathered considerable information, either directly or through the cooperation of other agencies such as the city planning commission or the local citizen housing association. The New York City Housing Authority led in making this material available to other public and private organizations,

¹⁰ The Chicago Housing Authority much later negotiated but never made use of a similar agreement with the city. The New York City Housing Authority carried on its own demolition campaign, partly as a

revenue measure; it eliminated more than enough substandard dwellings to fulfill the equivalent elimination requirement without depending upon the Department of Housing and Buildings.

while varying degrees of publicity were given similar data elsewhere.

Aggravating the housing problem are the generally unsatisfactory zoning ordinances. Public housing projects have been protected by specific provisions for rezoning, often required by USHA, but housing authorities have applied little pressure to the general improvement of zoning ordinances. However, in two cities in this study, New York and Chicago, wholesale revision of the zoning laws has been started.

Close coordination between the housing authority and municipal line agencies produces well planned individual housing projects. In such projects community facilities—for education, recreation, public health, public welfare—are adequately provided for the benefit of the project tenants and surrounding neighborhood. In the absence of these facilities public housing is merely public shelter and its beneficial effect on the social life of the community is severely restricted. The decision as to which agency shall provide and maintain these facilities involves a nice definition of functions. Most housing experts recommend that such facilities (except for play space for small children) continue to be provided through the regular municipal channels. This avoids overlapping services and insures an efficient division of labor. A joint effort to raise community standards is possible whenever a housing authority provides space in the project to be maintained by other agencies, perhaps with the aid of WPA workers. Moreover, an early understanding between the housing authority and related agencies is essential to avoid seriously upsetting the balance between existing community facilities and the need for them by bringing a large number of new families into a neighborhood. The New York City Housing Authority is in constant touch from the planning stage onward

with agencies providing community facilities, and a number of model cooperative arrangements have been concluded in the way of health clinics, nursery schools, parks, and recreation centers on a broad neighborhood basis. In Pittsburgh a noteworthy experiment in coordinating the efforts of the housing authority and Bureau of Recreation of the Department of Public Works will provide community recreation on a large scale for needy slum neighborhoods, the projects forming the nuclei of these recreation areas.

Nowhere was there complete coordination between the work of the housing authority and other agencies whose related activities are part of a comprehensive program. One impediment has been a lack of any clear allocation of functions between the housing authority and other groups. This has resulted from the newness of the housing authority, the broad nature of its powers, and its preoccupation with the immediate problems raised by USHA projects. Where the housing authority had a narrow conception of its role, there were large gaps in the attack on slums and blighted areas. Excepting a few authorities like those in New York and Pittsburgh, the prevailing attitude encouraged by independence seemed to prevent realization—not too prevalent even within the city government—that all these service agencies had a common interest in raising the living standards of low income families.

Prospects for Improved Coordination

If the foregoing pages have revealed few examples of serious conflict between the housing authority and municipal agencies, neither have they shown as many instances of coordination and cooperation as the opportunities warranted. An obvious solution would be incorporation of the housing authority into the municipal government. So far there has

been little popular dissatisfaction and no judicial interference with the independent housing authority. The fact that the authority is not self-supporting and requires municipal aid, however, makes its legal independence from the municipal government less and less defensible. The example of New York in levying a municipal tax for the purpose of public housing emphasizes the authority's fiscally dependent character.

A chief reason for the independent incorporation of the housing authority is the exhaustion of the municipality's debt-incurring power. One way to avoid this obstacle to the building of public housing by the municipality is to raise the debt limit, at least for housing purposes, as was done in New York State. Another alternative to the need for the authority device is the issuance of special revenue bonds. Although courts often interpret special revenue legislation more strictly than legislation which empowers borrowing through a special corporation, there appear to be no serious legal restrictions making this type of financing impracticable in many states. The New York Public Housing Act provides that the indebtedness of a city represented by its liability caused by guarantees in aid of a project, and that incurred by a city where the proceeds are loaned for a project, may be excluded from the debt limit if the project has yielded "net revenue"¹¹ during the preceding year.

If the debt limit were revised or special revenue housing bonds legalized, it would be financially feasible for the municipality to undertake public housing directly. Should housing be administered by a municipal department, coordination would tend to become automatic, and cooperation in many cases would be

mandatory. Under the leadership and direction of the mayor, the work of the housing agency could be harmonized with that of other departments. Reduction of the authority to department status would bring an efficient utilization of the municipal staff and auxiliary facilities. Under such a scheme the current and capital budgets of the housing agency would be integrated with the general city budget and city plans.

The Detroit Housing Commission is the only large housing agency now organized as a municipal department. Housing officials point to its difficulties with "red tape" and "interference" to justify their position on independence. Many of the administrative impediments are caused by malfunctioning of the municipal administration as a whole and the sooner attention is directed to their correction the better for all concerned. Other types of "red tape" are actually checks on honest and efficient administration which have been developed through long years of experience and should be regarded as an aid and protection rather than as annoying obstacles to freedom. "Interference" from the city council is to be expected as part of the democratic procedure where the government is entering a new field in which policy is experimental or controversial. It is by no means absent when the housing agency is organized as an independent body. Scrutiny of housing operations will become less close as policy becomes well established and broadly accepted. As the level of municipal administration rises there will be less reason or desire for autonomy. Integration could take place gradually as the public housing agency's activities become routinized. Thus the New York City Housing Authority now

¹¹ This is determined annually by deducting from the gross revenues of the project *including periodic subsidies* all operating, maintenance, repair and replacement

costs, interest on the indebtedness, and the amounts required in such year for payment of the indebtedness, if the interest and amortization have actually been paid.

occupies an intermediate position between complete autonomy and dependence.

Short of actual integration, what procedures might be followed to improve coordination between the housing authority and municipal government?

Ex officio membership in the housing authority by municipal government officials would tend to bring the two bodies closer together. Unfortunately, two-thirds of the state enabling acts provide that no member of a housing authority may be an official of the city or county, and several others permit only one or two such members. Without change in the legal relationships, coordination might be achieved at a lower level by making provision for the exchange of staff services between the housing authority and related departments and for the more liberal use of consultants from other agencies. In general, housing authorities would profit from more routine contacts with related agencies. Besides the selection of individuals to be responsible for frequent and regular contacts with particular municipal departments, other useful coordinating devices are interdepartmental committees on subjects of mutual concern or a general coordinating committee such as the Central Housing Committee which serves the numerous housing agencies in Washington. Occasional informal meetings of the authority or its staff members with other public officials further a pleasant personal relationship between them highly important for active cooperation.

Although housing officials have stressed publicity and public relations activities, municipal officials and the public in many cities are still inadequately informed concerning the work of the housing authority. Some authorities confuse publicity with public relations. The lat-

ter may involve a modification of the housing authority program in order to elicit a favorable response from other agencies. Knowledge of the programs of other groups and the ability to reciprocate favors received from them should increase the cooperation the housing authority may expect from others.

If and when local housing programs are expanded to include other than the building and management of USHA projects, the problem of coordination may become easier to solve. Although the close administrative control exercised by USHA over local authorities has insured the honesty and efficiency of their operations, certain characteristics of the federal administration do not promote local coordination. Impatience may be expressed with the slow deliberations of the city council; this does not make for friendly relations. There is too little understanding of the budget problems of the city government. Some housing authorities are tempted to pass the responsibility on to USHA when they are pressing the municipal government for concessions. Public acceptance of the housing program may also be promoted as its local character becomes more definite.

From the case studies of five large housing authorities it is evident that coordination between two independent bodies may be achieved where the responsible officials are personally inclined toward cooperation. Where they lack the will, they are not legally compelled to work together. In an integrated structure, on the other hand, clashing personalities cannot long impede coordination. In the last analysis, therefore, the legal relationship becomes a determining factor in harmonizing the activities of the housing authority with the municipal government.

